February 15, 1967

Mr. Sam Abbott
906 Dupont Circle Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sam:

MANCHESTER MACHIAVELLI: THE UNINTENDED UNOFFICIAL WHITEWASH is the book I shall do next and as rapidly as possible. I believe it is in the national interest to do this to offset the damage inherent in his work and the unfortunate publicity surrounding it. While this book will inevitably be pro-Kennedy in content, it is not in design. Its purpose is to show that Manchester's work is grossly in error in every element and aspect, with emphasis on contrasting his relatively little on the actual assassination, which is virtually 100 percent inaccurate, with what is in the Report and evidence of the Commission that proves both its inaccuracy and the lack of excuse for it. I have about 12,000 words of this drafted.

As you know from having heard me, I have from the beginning sought to make understandable that the then Attorney General disassociated himself from the control of the investigation, though it was made by the Department of Justice that he headed, to avoid the questions of vindictive motivation that otherwise might have arisen.

From Manchester's public statements I have known his book would be factually erroneous, and as early as November 1965 I offered Harper * Row all of my own materials for checking his accuracy. This offer, repeated several times, was never accepted. (I have not decided whether or not this will be included in the book.)

While to a degree the filing of the suits against Look and Harper * Row has disassociated the Kennedy name from the Manchester work, many questions still remain, including the repeated and persistent inference that his doctrine is theirs. Because the Kennedy family could not properly take a position with respect to the accuracy of his writing about the assassination and their public statements show they make no allegations of inaccuracy - more, infer accuracy - much of the hazard, in the present and historically, remains. There is still reason for the uninformed or wrongly informed or those of political motive to consider that the family has authorized an unofficial whitewash of the assassination. This I believe is false. I am more concerned about

the further national scandal and disgrace that can come from this than about the damage to the political futures of members of the Kennedy family, which I believe will be adversely affected.

I plan to tell the history of the Manchester book, explaining as I can from personal knowledge the legitimate fears of Mrs. Kennedy (I sat next to Jim Bishop for a long night and early morning and know he is a boob and I am familiar with essentially sensational and irresponsible writing that immediately ensued). Much of this is possible from what is now public.

If there were some way of getting copies of the various documents, such as agreements between Manchester and various people he interviewed and the Kennedys, the text of the communications that I think have been misinterpreted (particularly by Manchester, who alleges the agreement guaranteed serialization of the book prior to its publication) and things of this sort, I think it could be quite helpful. I believe that, had Mrs. Kennedy not filed suit, others could and would have. Perhaps the suits were filed, despite the charge of attempted censorship that it was known would be made, in part because of the possibility other suits would be filed.

I plan to analyze Manchester's public performance, his enormous ego and contempt for fact and reality. I have a considerable amount of material of this sort from his own public statements. And I believe he consciously set out to do a scandalous work in the certain knowledge it would make him rich. His work on the assassination itself is incredibly inadequate, and his knowledge of it is flattered by the designation "superficial".

Most of the book I plan to be on his straightforward factual inaccuracy, what amounts to a fictionalization of the crime. I do not believe that anyone not familiar in the most intimate detail with what is credible in the Commission's evidence can begin to comprehend the exquisite fineness of his inaccuracy. It is this that I think represents a very great danger of further national suffering unless the record is set straight promptly and in a manner that makes clear that this part of his writing has neither the sponsorship nor the approval of the Kennedy family. Unless it is made clear that there was no external inspiration for his total departure from reality in pretending a factual representation of the actual assassination, I fear there will soon be charges that the family sponsored an unofficial whitewash, accompanied by inferences that the then Attorney General is responsible for the official one.

I intend to conclude by showing that, regardless of what impelled the Kennedy suit, its intended purpose was to disassociate that name from every aspect of Manchester's work, including the assassination itself as distinguished from the slush, and

that the national interest, more than the political requirements, demanded this - that, in fact, the immediate Kennedy political interests suffered from the suit.

Because I am the author of the first and strongest criticism of the Report, the only one restricted to the official information and the only one who does not assault the integrity of the Commission members (and am the only one the former counsel for the Commission will not debate), I think this comes with most grace from me and is thereby also more credible.

I believe this book is necessary to minimize further suffering and scandal, to preserve what can be of what remains of the national honor, and that it must appear as fast as possible.

So, for the immediate future (and I do not think it will take long to do, especially if I can get some of the documents already made public in part or in full), I shall be concentrating on this and not WHITEWASH III: THE ARCHIVE. But I would like you to let me know when you think you will be able to do some work on that. My opinion of the importance of making public those documents that I now have is undiminished. This, not Manchester's slop, represents the real interest of historical accuracy.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg